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UNCLAS ROME 003516

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CUBAN CHARGE RESPONDS TO ITALIAN DEMARCHE: "NOBODY HAS DIED IN CUBA'S JAILS FROM MALTREATMENT"

REF: BASS/WHITAKER EMAILS 7/29-30

**¶1.** (SBU) FOLLOWING DISCUSSION IN REF EMAILS, ON JULY 30 EMBASSY ROME PASSED THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT ON IMPRISONED CUBAN DISSIDENT MARTA BEATRICE ROQUE'S HEALTH TO MFA UNDERSECRETARY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS BONIVER'S OFFICE AND TO MFA OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN AFFAIRS NICCOLO GORETTI. ON FRIDAY AUGUST 1 THE ITALIAN MFA CONVOKED THE CUBAN CHARGE IN ROME, HUGO RAMOS. THE ITALIANS CONVEYED THEIR CONCERNS REGARDING THE DETERIORATING HEALTH OF MS. ROQUE AND MR. OSCAR ESPINOSA CHEPE.

**¶2.** (SBU) MFA SOURCES REPORT THE CHARGE FIRST INDICATED THE HEALTH OF THE PRISONERS WAS AN INTERNAL CUBAN AFFAIR AND THUS THE EU SHOULD NOT INTERFERE, AND THEN AGREED TO PASS THE ITALIAN'S POINTS TO HAVANA. MR. RAMOS ALSO SHARED THAT "NOBODY HAS DIED IN CUBA'S JAILS FROM MALTREATMENT." MFA SOURCES INDICATED THEY WERE NOT CONTEMPLATING FURTHER ACTION ON THE DISSIDENTS' PLIGHT AT THIS TIME.

SEMBLER

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